



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

THE PLANTATION TYPE OF COLONY

INASMUCH as the various colonial governments in America were different in form and appearance, and inasmuch as the government of any one colony sometimes altered in form as time went on, writers and teachers have shown a tendency to dwell upon these dissimilarities and to emphasize their presence as throwing light on the evolution of the American state. Whether this manner of treating our history, if fairly done, be right or wrong, it certainly brings difficulties to the student who takes up the constitutional side of colonial development, for it obscures as well as illumines. More grateful, sometimes, is the discovery of similar institutions and conditions. Approaching the subject from this side, the effort must be to emphasize the features that are common. If, for example, it be possible to show that the earliest settlements in Virginia, New England and New Netherland had common, but distinctive, features which mark them as different from later colonial forms, then it is permissible to use these features as descriptive of a form of community that may be called typical. This form would stand as the earliest practical model of colonial effort. Such a type would conveniently aid analysis and comparison at the beginning of colonial history. If, with this step taken, it be possible to go still further and to point out that this special type reproduced itself all through colonial history, even though in modified forms, then another step has been taken and the original type stands forth as a concept that touches the whole colonial period. Like the biologist's concept of a "genus" it may be a standard for testing and grouping allied forms.

The conditions at Jamestown from 1610 onward give the earliest illustration of a colonial community which can be used as the type of a persistent form. The English settlements at Jamestown and Sagadahoc before 1610 were both tentative and undisciplined efforts ending in abandonment. But when Lord Delaware turned back the fugitives who had fled from Jamestown in 1610 and re-established the colony, he began a period marked by better management and more definite aims. The Jamestown colony, as maintained by Delaware and his deputies, had the following characteristics; absence of private property, agriculture as industrial basis, union of pro-

prietorship with jurisdiction, government for economic ends chiefly, and discretionary administration. The absence of private property is the most striking feature, perhaps, of this colony. Under the charter the soil of Virginia was given by the crown to the Virginia Company and held by the company at its own disposal. Houses were built upon the soil, and garden-plots were assigned¹ to colonists, but there was nothing of permanence in the possession so given, and private property in land was thus absent. The labor of the colonists was pledged to the company for a term of years, being at the disposal of the company's governor in return for maintenance and future dividends.² While the word "servant" is seldom applied to the company's colonists, probably because they were technically stock-holders, nevertheless they were really hired employees and treated as such. It is true, then, that private property in labor was absent. Cattle were constantly sent to Virginia by the company.³ Necessarily they were cared for by colonists, but they seem to have remained company property.⁴ Sandys calls them happily "the goods of the Company, for the service of the public."⁵ The produce of the colonists' labor, when exported, was the property of the company and sold for its benefit. Economic conditions indicate the colony as like a private estate. Two other facts are pertinent; colonists had no right to export for themselves,⁶ they had no right of residence if the colonial governor thought fit to deport them, nor right to depart if the governor were unwilling that they should do so.⁷

Agriculture was the basic industry of colonial life, because no other source of food supply was as convenient and reliable as that of the tilled field. The other sources of supply were Indian trade, fishing and English aid, but none of these was as important as agriculture. The historical importance of agriculture lies in its moulding influence upon colonial life. In Virginia especially, the rise of tobacco-culture was notable, but even before the first tobacco-crop the value of land as a means for agricultural effort was leading the colonists on to progressive steps of great significance. The tillage

¹ Force, *Tracts*, I. "New Life of Virginia," p. 14.

² For terms given colonists: Force, *Tracts*, I. "Nova Britannia," 23-24; also Brown, *Genesis of the United States*, I. 249, 253, 426. For management of labor: Force, *Tracts*, III. "True Declaration," p. 20, and "Laws Divine," pp. 15-16; also Brown, *Genesis*, I. 491-493.

³ Force, *Tracts*, I. "New Life of Virginia," p. 12; "Nova Britannia," p. 23.

⁴ Force, *Tracts*, III. "Laws Divine," p. 15, shows control by company.

⁵ Brown, *The First Republic in America*, 225.

⁶ Free trade began 1618. Brown, *First Republic*, 259.

⁷ Free migration was granted by 1617. Brown, *Genesis*, II. 798.

done in Virginia before 1610 seems to have been unsystematic. The union of economic proprietorship and political jurisdiction was the third characteristic feature of Jamestown colony. The company held both political and economic control over the colony and exercised both without separation, by giving them into the hands of the governor whom it set over the colony. But while the company possessed both political and economic powers, its chief interest lay with the latter. The fact that government was for economic ends chiefly is another characteristic. That there were altruistic ideas like conversion of savages and relief of paupers attached to dreams of development need not be forgotten, but the practical ruling motive of action is plainly commercial. Hence the contrast between the early colony and its later form. The proprietors worked and hoped for returning cargoes of marketable products, while the colonial governor busied himself to plant crops, control his workmen, buy furs, husband supplies and scheme for new sources of wealth.¹ The earliest colonial history is distinctly economic. Discretionary administration was also characteristic of the earliest colonies. Given a body of men needing to be held sternly to uncongenial work, and the necessity of a strong hand in control is apparent. At Jamestown the governor had absolute power.² Nominally the colonists had a right to vote as stock-holders at company meetings, but there is no record of proxies from them, and by neither royal charter nor company grant were they given any power against the company's governor. This gave the governor full discretionary power, exercised with the advice of a council chosen by himself.

At New Plymouth colony conditions similar to those at Jamestown existed. The colonists here were offered, and, after hesitation, accepted terms like those of the Virginia colonists. The lands of the colony belonged undividedly to a group of persons vaguely described as "John Pierce and his associates," under which term were included some London merchants and also such colonists as might be duly enrolled with them as partners. Unlike the Virginia Company, they held no charter although organized as a joint-stock company. Under the terms given the colonists, the latter were to settle on the land which the partners held from the New England Council, pledging their labor for a term of years, receiving meanwhile, from the common treasury, houses, food and clothing, and in return sending the London men such products as they could.³ Obviously, these conditions left no room for individual property. In this

¹ Brown, *Genesis*, I. 385, 415, 491-493.

² *Ibid.*, I. 376-383, also II. 801.

³ *Bradford's History "of Plimoth Plantation"* (ed. 1898), 56-58.

colony agriculture took its place as the industry on which colonial life depended most. Fishing and fur-trade were developed, it is true, but to the colonists themselves the importance and necessity of tillage were clear,¹ and their earliest disagreement with the London partners was caused by their demand for land of their own.² Union of jurisdiction with proprietorship existed at New Plymouth also by virtue of the patent from the New England Council.³ There was no separation of the two in colonial administration. Colonial government was carried on for economic purposes, the governor being responsible to the London partners and occupied in overseeing labor and supplies.⁴ The last feature of those enumerated was present, though not in the absolute form adopted in Virginia. At New Plymouth the governor, although an officer charged with the interests of European investors, was nevertheless elected to his place by the colonists. His elective tenure seems not, however, to have prevented him from wielding discretionary power,⁵ unchecked by local statutes or immunities of any sort.

New Netherland was first settled with posts of fur-traders, but until 1624 there is no evidence of family life or of systematic agriculture in the colony and, therefore, no hint of permanent settlement. After 1624, when the West India Company sent over actual agricultural colonists, the history of New Netherland shows some likeness to that of the English colonies. The details of the first ten years after 1624 are very obscure, but such positive and negative evidence as exists points clearly to a type of colony like that of Jamestown in its essential characteristics. As to land-ownership, it is clear that the company bought Manhattan Island for itself in 1626 and removed to it the scattered colonists previously sent over, that six farms were laid out, which seem to have been company property at first and were certainly so some years later, and that there is no reference to private land holding on Manhattan before 1636.⁶ As to labor, it is certain that a considerable part of the colonists were employees of the company.⁷ There is no definite

¹ *Ibid.*, 162.

² *Ibid.*, 58.

³ Massachusetts Historical Society, *Collections*, Fourth Series, Vol. II.

⁴ *History "of Plimoth Plantation,"* 129, 133-135, 139, 191.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 133-135, 151, etc.

⁶ Scattered hints on land in *N. Y. Col. Docs.*, I. 37, in *Doc. Hist. of N. Y.*, III. 28, 31, 32, in *N. Y. Hist. Soc. Coll.*, 2d S., II. 345. While there is no positive evidence against private holdings before 1636, the conditions are such as to throw the burden of proof upon those who might claim their existence. It is unlikely that private holdings should exist during 1627-1636 without some current or retrospective reference to them.

⁷ *Doc. Hist. of N. Y.*, III. 30; *N. Y. Col. Docs.*, I. 181, 296, II. 765; Force, *Tracts*, II. "Planters Plea," 27-28.

statement extant as to the terms given colonists, but various hints show that they were transported by the company, paid wages after their arrival, and furnished with some amount of supplies.¹ These hired colonists were not members of the West India Company.² The company also sent over cattle, which were cared for by colonists, and yet, apparently, remained the property of the company.³ Such facts as these show that the proprietors of New Netherland were bent on establishing an agricultural community on Manhattan Island. The governor whom they sent over to manage their interests lived at Manhattan and managed both the local affairs and the more distant work of the fur-trading stations. As in the English colonies, the company held both jurisdiction and proprietorship.

The three earlier colonies thus show the dominance of the economic motive over the political. The problems of the early governors were those of commerce rather than of statecraft, and the colonies themselves must be considered essentially unlike their own later forms when the political phase of government became more developed. Englishmen of the colonial period called the American settlements "plantations," and that word is a convenient one for designating the earliest type of colonial experiment. A definition may be made. The "plantation type" of colony is that form of settlement which showed in its structure the economic motive in its completest form; or, the typical form of a plantation was that of an economic unity, based upon agriculture, under an exclusive local government which combined political jurisdiction with the powers of economic proprietorship. Since a type is only a standard of measurement for classification, it is not essential that it should actually exist, but the plantation type as here described did exist at two, probably three, separated points.

The plantation type had but a short existence in those places where it appeared, a change being wrought by the appearance of private property in land. Obviously the plantation was no longer an economic unity when the immediate control of tillage passed out of the hands of the plantation proprietors. Only political unity remained. The appearance of private property was always the beginning of a change that ceased not until the economic control of the proprietors was swallowed up. In the Virginia colony the altera-

¹ *Col. Docs.*, I. 181, II. 768; *Doc. Hist. of N. Y.*, III. 30.

² They had, consequently, no promise of future dividends like English colonists. In later years, and probably from the beginning, the West India Company kept an account with each employee, crediting with regular wages, and debiting with supplies and transportation. The account could be completely closed at any time.

³ *Doc. Hist. of N. Y.*, III. 25, 26; *N. Y. Hist. Soc. Coll.*, 2d S., III. 89; *N. Y. Col. Docs.*, XIV. 5, 6, 19.

tion of the plantation type can be roughly traced in the time of Dale and Argall. The change seems to have begun in 1614 when Dale allotted small tracts to some of the colonists on a formal tenure involving quit-rent and one month of labor in each year.¹ These tracts passed to private tillage, and before the close of the year there were eighty-one of these farms in the colony.¹ Whether this idea was Dale's own, or the result of English orders, is not clear. Up to this time the colony had cost the proprietors about 500,000 dollars² without any balance of profit, and Dale's move seemed intended to make the colony self-supporting. The new policy was popular in Virginia. In 1617, when Argall came, the number of tenant-farmers on the company land outnumbered those bound to regular service.³ Apparently acting under instructions, Argall did more to destroy the old system on the company's plantation by selling the cattle to private owners.⁴ A year later he reported that the land under cultivation was completely exhausted,⁵ and some hints indicate that he stopped entirely the work on the company's farms.⁶ Thus within five years the colonial governors were evidently shifting off from the company the burden, as it had proved to be, of managing a plantation. There yet remained various tracts to the company, worked by colonists whom they sent over, but the Jamestown plantation was parcelled out to private interests. The proclamation of 1619 may perhaps be called its final ending.⁷

The plantation at New Plymouth had a shorter lease of unity than that at Jamestown. Discouraged by recurring ill-luck the London proprietors, upon whom rested the burden of maintenance, failed to send their people adequate support. Governor Bradford met the emergency in 1623 by assigning tracts on yearly tenure with economic independence for each possessor. In the same year the London partners sent over free planters for the first time, and their number was increased somewhat by an emancipation of discontented colonists.⁸ By the close of 1623 the New Plymouth colony had reached the same point to which Jamestown had come in 1616, that is to say, it contained private interests and free labor based upon a very weak land-tenure. In this condition the colony remained for a time, while the London partners made some futile

¹ Brown, *First Republic*, 205, 227, 229.

² *Ibid.*, 432.

³ *Ibid.*, 253.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 258, 279.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 260.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 277.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 287.

⁸ Changes of 1623 in *History "of Plimoth Plantation,"* 162, 201, 171, 178, 188.

efforts toward support. Finally, when the London men were \$7,000 in debt and weary of it all,¹ the colonists offered to buy them out and the bargain was struck. Smith said in 1624 that about \$35,000 had been sunk in the experiment.² While this was far less than the cost of Jamestown, it was enough to stamp the venture as a business failure. By the deed of sale to the colonists the powers of the London men over the colony were transferred. The American proprietors thereupon divided up the occupied land and the cattle among themselves,³ and the plantation placed itself upon a basis of recognized individualism. The colonists retained the political power, however, as a common interest and it continued to be exercised by the colonial governors whom they chose at the annual elections. At New Plymouth as at Jamestown the story of the colony shows proprietary losses, temporary installation of private interests, and the absorption of the proprietors' improved property by the holders of private interests.

In the Dutch colony at Manhattan the effort to make plantation work profitable proved as unsuccessful as in the English settlements, apparently.⁴ Such profit as came to the West India Company through New Netherland was from the fur-trade. In 1629 the company issued the Articles of Freedoms and Exemptions, which offered privileges to owners of private plantations and to individual free planters.⁵ Under these articles the private plantation of Pavonia was settled on the west side of the Hudson, but otherwise there seem to have been no results in the Manhattan region from the concessions of 1629. Not until 1636 is there any evidence of private land-holding on or near the Manhattan purchase. In that year certain Indian grants of farms on Long Island were validated and a grant is said to have been made of land on Manhattan Island itself.⁶ These acts are the earliest recorded alteration of the dimly indicated economic unity of the plantation. The creation of free farms on Long Island brought under the local management of Manhattan some persons who were politically subordinate to but economically independent of the company, and who had a recognized attachment to the soil. About the same time that private interests in land were beginning, the director of the colony was selling or leasing the cattle of the company, and allowing the company farms

Ibid., 240-241.

¹ Arber, *Capt. John Smith*, 783, 943.

² *History "of Plimoth Plantation,"* 259; Plymouth Records, XI. 4.

³ *N. Y. Col. Docs.*, I. 40, 65, 84, 181; *New Eng. Reg.*, XL. 70.

⁴ Article 21 relates to free planters. *N. Y. Col. Docs.*, II. 556.

⁵ *N. Y. Col. Docs.*, XIV. 2-4; Brodhead, *History of the State of New York*, I. 266.

to be turned from tillage to pasture.¹ Director Van Twiller, under whom these incidents occurred, was superseded in 1638 by Director Kieft. In his first year of control some orders were issued for the control of the company's men and the recall of company property,² but the growth of private interests was encouraged. It was Kieft who created a mass of tenantry on Manhattan Island by granting lands on quit-rent, first by specific instrument and then by general order.³ The grants made during Kieft's first two years included leases of the company farms, of its saw-mill and smithy,⁴ showing the completeness of the growth of individualism. Apparently the Manhattan agricultural settlement had passed through the same cycle of change as Jamestown and New Plymouth, although its progress is far more obscure.

The summing up of these repeated examples of plantation change must be, at the best, unsatisfactory, because of the lack of full details, but there seems to be a logical course of events. The first step was doubtless the appearance of the free laborer on the plantation, whose presence was due, not to free immigration, but to the expiration of service. Many colonists went back to Europe when their terms expired, but others preferred the free frontier life. The next step may have been a demand for private tracts at a time when absentee farming was felt to be a failure. The third step was perhaps the knowledge that private enterprise could pay more toll to the proprietors than the proprietors could win for themselves by direct plantation effort. It may fairly be said that the collapse of proprietary effort was closely connected with the rise of the free planter. Perhaps John Locke showed a touch of shrewd foresight when he wished to make the colonists of Carolina a class doomed to perpetual service.

About the same time that the plantation colonies transformed themselves, another alteration of conditions took place in each colony, which emphasized the transition of colonial government from economic motives to political. This was the differentiation of colony government from local government. The governments of the early plantation colonies had in them the elements of both local and general control, managing as they did the actual interests of single small settlements and yet holding the powers necessary for governing the whole region in which a settlement lay. At first these colonial governments were essentially local in nature.

¹ *N. Y. Col. Docs.*, XIV. 5-6, 19; *N. Y. Hist. Soc. Coll.*, 2d S., I. 279.

² O'Callaghan, *Laws and Ordinances*, 17-18, 20.

³ *N. Y. Col. Docs.*, XIV. 6, 9-10.

⁴ *N. Y. Col. Docs.*, XIV. 7, 21-23, 26; *Calendar Dutch MSS.*, II.

When settlements multiplied, the extensive powers of the several executives, which had been possessed from the beginning, were utilized to enforce political unity. The change brought no break in the sequence of colonial administration. The word "colony" merely took on a broader meaning than before, while "plantation" remained what it had been, a local community subject to colonial government. The plantation type is therefore the ancestor of the older colonial and state governments by direct derivation.

But the plantation type begins not only the development of colonial government but that of local government as well, for as agricultural settlements multiplied beyond the first simple establishments, the various features of the plantation type reappeared in the new communities. Usually these features were more or less modified in their extent and completeness, but still they were characteristic, and their presence marks off broadly a certain large group of local governments as radically different in nature from the local communities of the present time. In this group are included the privileged plantations of Virginia, the manors of several colonies, the patroonships of New Netherland and many of the New England towns. The kinship of these places to the plantation type is plain. They were based upon agricultural organization. There were in each a measure of economic unity, a combination of jurisdiction with powers of proprietorship, and some use of civil administration for economic ends. This group of modified forms includes also such settlements as that of the Massachusetts Bay Company, which, like early Jamestown, was both plantation and colony, but which was not of the pure plantation type. An evolution went on in these modified forms in much the same way as it had in the first colonial plantations. Sometimes the course of events stripped away the jurisdictional side of a settlement and allowed it to fall back into a mere personal estate, but more often the economic side was given up and the community developed into a political entity with only political powers.

The differentiation of colonial and local government in Virginia began with the settlement of Henrico in 1611 as a plantation like Jamestown, belonging to the Virginia Company. In 1613, the Bermuda plantation was organized by Dale. It was, apparently, a co-operative or corporate plantation composed of company employees pledged to three years of service and holding some sort of political privileges.¹ In 1617 other modified forms of the plantation type were created by the locating of private plantations upon lands granted by the company. Virginia was the first colony to develop

¹ Brown, *First Republic*, 194, 210, 240.

subordinate plantations. In 1620 the peculiar corporate form was adopted for another plantation organized for Virginia, but oddly cast upon New England shores instead. The self-government of New Plymouth was an anomaly in colonial settlement, which needs more explanation than has yet been given.¹ Normally the plantation governor should have been sent over from London.

The development of modified forms in New England was accompanied by much apparent confusion, because the various small settlements were left to follow their own courses without general supervision. The New England Council always intended to establish a general colonial government over New England, making it a unity like Virginia, but the council was too poor to carry out the idea. Owing to this plan, the various settlements which were founded under the council's patents were considered to be subordinate plantations. Hence the variety in the forms of settlement, some having jurisdiction, as New Plymouth, Wessagusset, Massachusetts Bay and Piscataqua, while others had no civil power whatever. Hence also the varied results visible after the plantation efforts had collapsed, as the most of them did. Out of the ruins of plantation efforts arose a modified form of remarkable vitality, that is to say, the New England town. In its completest form it was a corporate plantation, with combined powers of jurisdiction and proprietorship, and a small measure of economic unity.

In New Netherland the modified forms of the plantation type appeared in 1630, when private settlements were organized under the provisions of the Articles of Freedoms and Exemptions. Of the three patroonships established, Swanendael was destroyed by Indians, and Pavonia was united to the Manhattan plantation, but Rensselaerwyck, on the Hudson River, kept an almost independent existence for many years. Other patroonships were created at a later date and New Netherland had several forms of local government. The tenant rights of the Rensselaerwyck property endured to make trouble for the New York government until the middle of the nineteenth century.

What was the original source of the plantation type which appeared in America is an interesting question. There is a tempting analogy between the plantation type in America and the manor

¹ Bradford curiously fails to tell of any agreement as to government. Robinson's letter, *Hist. "of Plim. Plant.,"* p. 81, shows that the concession preceded the voyage. The Mayflower compact was probably a temporary device. Smith says in 1624 (Arber, *Smith*, p. 782) that the Plymouth men received council and directions from the London partners but no commands. Queries arise in connection with the particulars' agreement (*Hist. "of Plim. Plant.,"* 177), Lyford's complaint against exclusion (p. 217), and the partners' complaint (p. 238).

type in Europe. Both are based upon the ideas of economic unity and proprietary jurisdiction,¹ and some resemblances may be traced in the manner of working. In some cases there is clear evidence that the Old World manor was copied in modified forms of the plantation type. This is true of the Maryland manors, in certain Virginia plantations, in the patroonships of New Netherland and in Gorges's settlement in Maine. Feudal ideas are plain in the charters of Calvert, Plowden, Gorges and the Carolina grantees. Nevertheless, this does not prove that Jamestown or New Plymouth or Manhattan were copies of manors either in their forms or in their workings. The question is an open one.

L. D. SCISCO.

¹ Note the charge that Pierce intended to make the New Plymouth settlement a manor, in *Hist. "of Plim. Plant.,"* 167-168.